The Intertextual Short Play: An Example Using Verga’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and Capuana’s *Il piccolo archivio*

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“The historians of literature do not see, beyond the surface agitation and splashes of color, the great and essential destinies of literature and language, whose chief, foremost characters are the genres, while currents and schools are lesser characters.”

(M. M. Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” in Todorov 81)1

“[I]n una storia della letteratura drammatica sarebbe da cercare e da far risaltare sopra tutto l’unità dell’organismo a traverso le forme apparenti e casuali [. . .].”

(L. Capuana, *Il teatro italiano contemporaneo* xvii–xviii)

In their recent *The One-Act Play Companion*, Rex Walford and Colin Dolley remark with a hint of surprise that “apart from play catalogues

1For many of Bakhtin’s excerpts, I have preferred Godzich’s newer and more expressive translation to others already available.
which briefly describe the synopses of published one act plays, hardly anything has been written about the genre [. . .] in the English language” (xii). The situation is not any different for Italian theatre, where the attention reserved for shorter plays seldom extends beyond studies of single playwrights. Yet, the genre in performance holds great promise due to its hitherto underrated dialogic predisposition. In order to explore this view, I will employ the wide-ranging framework of intertextuality and show, by way of example, what can be accomplished with Giovanni Verga’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and Luigi Capuana’s *Il piccolo archivio*, the first two one-act plays by the founders of the verismo school. I will first introduce theoretical observations about the genre, then analyze each work in the context of verist poetics, and finally suggest ideas for their potential interaction on the stage today.

**The Short Play as Dialogic Genre**

“The sufficient and necessary condition for the unity of a genre from epoch to epoch are the ‘secondary’ features such as the size of the construction.”

(Y. Tynianov, “The Literary Fact” 32)

“[O]ne who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together.”

(G. Genette, *Palimpsests* 399)

The notion of genre has recently been reevaluated as “signalling not prescription and exclusion but opportunity and common purpose” (Duff 2). Identifying a specific purpose for our *little genre* starts by looking more closely at two categories frequently regarded as synonymous: the *one-act* and the *short play*. In purely formal terms, the one-act is

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2After the 1920s, when the genre attracted more theoretical attention, only a few articles followed Kozlenko’s *The One-Act Play Today* (1939). General studies have been written, but mainly in German: see Schnetz (1967), Pazarkaya (1973), and Halbritter (1975). For a synthetic encyclopedia entry, see Neumann (1994).

3The term “intertextuality” was coined by Kristeva (66), but was born as a concept with Bakhtin, who used the words *dialogism* and *transtextuality*. For a comprehensive introduction to the complex and, at times, deceptive terminology as understood by each critic, see Allen.

4See, for instance, Neumann (102).
defined by the absence of an intermission and the short play by its brevity. The two may overlap, or not. Typically, the one-act is also brief, but there are exceptions of plays written to last an entire evening. At the same time, the short play may be called by other names, such as farce, scene, sintesi, or ten-minute play, depending on poetics or historical circumstances. In the context of realism, the one-act play was appreciated for its hypnotic qualities that allowed the hiding of the author’s presence.

I will argue that our emphasis should now shift to the category of the short play because of the degree of intertextuality it affords on the stage. Thanks to its brevity, the short play (be it called one-act play or otherwise) is the unique dramatic form that can show dialogue between works in action. The obvious reason is that, given the average attention span of regular audiences, a director will avoid cramming two full-length plays into a single evening, but will easily stage a double- or triple-bill of shorter plays. This practice, more frequent for amateur troupes, has not been as intense in the professional theatre. As a consequence, critical studies of plays together are uncommon and, in most cases, they focus exclusively on a single playwright, not on the contextual links with other plays. The catch is that brevity alone may be insufficient if the plays staged together remain unrelated. Dialogue between them must take place for the production to generate larger epiphanies, but this is rarely achieved and even more rarely discussed. In truth, a deeper understanding of the genre through critical theory can result in a stronger presence of the short play in theatre studies and on the contemporary professional stage.

It is helpful, at this point, to distinguish between monologic and dialogic approaches by referring to the basic difference between Saussure’s linguistics and Bakhtin’s translinguistics (his word for intertextuality), or, in other words, between a theory of the sentence and a theory of the utterance. Saussure’s idea of a linguistic synchronic system views signs as abstract entities, existing in opposition to each other but independent from actual dialogue; Bakhtin’s correction directs attention to the concrete circumstances of exchange. For Saussure, the main object of study is the sentence of a single speaker; for Bakhtin, it is “the utterance as a unit of speech communication” (“Speech Genres” 73) between at least two interlocutors, constantly influencing each other in the expectation of a response (76). While Saussure would

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5Walford and Dolley note how “the trend is for longer one-act plays so now the boundary between the full-length and the one-act script has become blurred” (1). Also, some one-acts are split in definite sections and may call for an interval despite their generic label.
see a work in isolation, Bakhtin perceives it within a dialogic web of relations with other works of its particular cultural sphere (75).

Even Bakhtin’s vision, however, leaves the short play in a subordinate relationship to the full-length form in the abstract realm of playtexts. In a scholarly article or at the library, one can take the time to research how each play connects to a dramatist’s oeuvre, an artistic school, or even the entire world dramaturgy. So, in theory, there is no significant distinction between a full-length and a short play as both types operate as utterances of different lengths that can be intertextually witnessed in the mind of the reader. But, in reality, the full-length play is dominant, and the short play remains secondary because it is often perceived as too limited to convey a deeper meaning or bear the fruits of a playwright’s maturity. For an understanding of how the short play can function as a special dramatic voice, it is therefore paramount to connect the idea of dialogism with that of performance.

Intertextuality obviously exists everywhere. As Todorov specifies, it is thus a matter of distinguishing “not between discourses endowed with intertextuality and those devoid of it, but between two roles, one weak and one strong, that intertextuality can be called on to play” (63). If drama as genre already cannot compare to the novel—at least in Bakhtin’s view—in terms of intertextual depth, it looks even weaker once it is staged for an audience as it imposes clear physical limitations that may impede the flow of the Text. Especially with full-length plays, if anyone wants to notice textual contiguities, one must either go home and re-read (space distance), or compare fading memories of past shows and patiently wait for other related performances in an uncertain future (time distance). When a play in any number of acts occupies the entire time allotted, it resounds like a specific author’s singular voice that expects no replies from other texts; the monologic work is in turn reinterpreted by a single director who may choose to preserve the straight line of filiation or rather err in departing from its authority. In a sense, a big theatre can be smaller than a shelf or a table when its black box contains only one work.

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6This happens because characters tend to be presented as monologic. Allen notes that “[d]ialogism is not literally the dialogues between characters within a novel. Every character in the dialogic novel has a specific, in some senses unique, personality. This ‘personality’ involves that character’s worldview, typical mode of speech, ideological and social positioning, all of which are expressed through the character’s words” (23). The same can be applied to drama.

7Barthes says that “[t]he Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after. The Author [. . .] is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child” (“Author” 145).
This is where the short play offers a precious alternative with a stronger role of intertextuality at the theatre. Thanks to its brevity, it may be used as a flexible tool that can dramatize dialogue between works before the eyes of the spectators, in the here and now of the performance. As Roland Barthes puts it, “the Text is experienced only in an activity of production. It follows that the Text cannot stop [. . .] its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works)” (“Work to Text” 157). By staging at least two short plays within the same event, a director is in the position to offer not an authorial sentence, but a series of utterances and a vision of dialogic interrelation, thereby leading the audience to ponder the larger intertextual matrix.

In a situation of heightened awareness around the Text, the director’s function automatically shifts from representing yet another author to an ideal reader and first spectator, what Barthes calls modern scriptor, Bakhtin superaddressee, and what I picture as the referee of a boxing match who calls the contenders to the ring, but does not know the outcome in advance.8

Since language is an arbitrary system, the director’s first step is to choose the roster—that is, to define the system itself. It could embrace the entire genre of short plays, only those written in a certain period, and so on. For the purposes of this article, we can play the role of a virtual director, selecting a slate that illuminates the intertextual nature of the short play. To simplify matters considerably, but still allow for a number of appealing combinations, let’s limit ourselves to the nine one-acts by Verga and Capuana written for the spoken theatre (not for opera) and in Italian (not in dialect).9 Although it is not possible to go into much detail for each of them, it is important to witness what the selection process could look like. The next step happens on the paradigmatic axis, with the evaluation of alternatives to be combined on the syntagmatic level of performance.

Two of Verga’s one-acts would be perfect candidates for a contextual presentation, because they were conceived as twins at birth: La

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8“[T]he modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate” (“Author” 145). “Any utterance always has an addressee [. . .]. But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance [. . .] presupposes a higher superaddressee (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed” (“Text” 126).

9Capuana wrote both dialect theatre (Teatro dialettale) and operatic libretti in one act (Teatro italiano vol. 2). Verga only drafted the argomento for Il mistero, a one-act opera later developed by Giovanni Monleone; although he chose not to write plays in dialect in view of Italy’s unification, his works were translated by regional companies such as Grasso’s.
caccia al lupo and La caccia alla volpe. Yet, since they belong to the same dramatist, the choice may be too author-centric for a study on intertextuality. As a consequence, Cavalleria rusticana is Verga’s only remaining play.

With which of Capuana’s plays could Cavalleria converse? With Gastigo, in which “la coerenza al vero [. . .] è certamente superata nei dialoghi dai toni enfatici” (Oliva, “Nota” 224), one could thematize the theatrical and excessive aspects, later disowned, of verismo. With Un brindisi, we have a potential unifying concept in wine, coupled with tragic undertones. With Riricchia, set in a rural Sicilian setting, the theme could be the outcome—tragic or comic—of a love quadrangle at a lower level of society. Un vampiro seems too distant stylistically and thematically for any specific connection. At the end of the process, La buona vendetta and Il piccolo archivio, both written in a very subdued style, appear particularly interesting, because they contrast sharply with Cavalleria’s tone and setting while presenting the common theme of betrayal.

The final choice of Il piccolo archivio over the other depends on its heretofore overlooked intertextual vein, a quality that resonates with the journey through adaptation of Cavalleria. Finally, for historical reasons, the two plays are essentially very different sides of the same coin and it would be fascinatingly “dramatic” to witness their close encounter on the stage. Indeed, their combination could take advantage of the richness of ambiguities contained in verist poetics.

**Verist Poetics and the Unrealized Importance of the One-act Play**

“The first task is to understand the work as the author understood it, without leaving the limits of his understanding. The accomplishment of this task is most demanding and usually requires the scrutiny of an immense corpus. The second task is to use one’s temporal and cultural exotopy. Inclusion in our context (alien to the author).”

(M. M. Bakhtin, *Extracts from notes from the years 1970–71* in Todorov 109)

Alessandro d’Amico characterizes one of the main achievements of *verismo* as “un riavicinamento [. . .] tra letteratura e teatro. Sembrò
colmato un secolare distacco” (30). The concrete inspiration to pen specifically verist plays came from Émile Zola’s *Le naturalisme au théâtre* (1881), wherein he lamented the absence in France of a dramaturgy based on simplicity and far from the depleted conventions of the well-made play: calculated effect for its own sake.\(^\text{10}\) Seeing a comparable situation in Italy, the verists seized the opportunity to devise a new type of playwriting. Capuana readily perceived the extraordinary proximity to drama of the short story and noted that “pel modo come noi intendiamo il romanzo e la novella, da questi al dramma propriamente detto c’è proprio un passo e non molto difficile” (Letter to Verga, 12 Oct. 1883; Raya 207). In *Palimpsests*, a study on literature in the second degree, Gérard Genette defines transmodalization as the passage from one mode to another, from narrative to dramatic and vice versa (277–78).\(^\text{11}\) The verists fully employed the process on several occasions and in both directions, “spinge[ndo] al massimo il narrato verso il rappresentato e il rappresentato verso il narrato” (Angelini 328). More importantly, the theory of impersonality they developed within the narrative genre seemed to point to the dramatic mode as the ultimate solution to attain the total invisibility of the author (Oliva, “Capuana” xxii).\(^\text{12}\) For verismo, the author does not “die,” but tries to “put himself in his characters’ skin” and remain undetected.\(^\text{13}\)

The theory functioned just fine in the realm of poetics (monologic sentence), but when the time came to exit the writer’s studio and convince theatre practitioners to stage the plays (dialogic utterance), the process was colored by mutual distrust. During the Ottocento, the so-called great actors had managed to make spoken theatre competitive again with opera and ballet, but had done so at the price of

\(^{10}\)Capuana and Verga began experimenting with drama very early in their career, Capuana with the patriotic myth *Garibaldi* (1861) and Verga with the political comedy *I nuovi tartufi* (1865).

\(^{11}\)While dramatization has been a systematic practice since the dawn of Western drama (278), narrativization is much less frequent (282).

\(^{12}\)Possibly the most famous passage about verist impersonality appears in the manifesto-letter to Salvatore Farina prefaced to the short story *L’amante di Gramigna*, where Verga defines the goal of a work which “semerà essersi fatta da sé” (405). For the details of the theory of impersonality, see Rossetti. For the importance of the dramatic mode in verismo, see De Roberto: “L’impersonalità assoluta, non può conseguirsi che nel puro dialogo, e l’ideale della rappresentazione obiettiva, consiste nella scena come si scrive pel teatro” (Prefazione 11).

\(^{13}\)See Capuana: “I veri artisti pensano per conto loro [. . .] ma il loro pensiero non si manifesta mai con la caratteristica di puro pensiero; si nasconde, si rifugia nelle creature appassionate, qualunque esse sieno [. . .] che egli butta sul palcoscenico” (“Il teatro” 188); and Verga: “ho cercato di mettermi nella pelle dei miei personaggi, vedere le cose coi loro occhi ed esprimerle colle loro parole” (14 July 1899; *Lettere* 49).
monopolizing all aspects of performance, including the textual. To Ernesto Rossi, Tommaso Salvini, or Adelaide Ristori, the dramatist was a mere employee at their service. By contrast, verismo “fu il primo a porre all’attore italiano il problema di una mimesi del testo” (d’Amico 45). The verist writers aimed for a new kind of theatre, written in a fresh and contemporary language, no longer amateur, improvised, leaning towards a distant past, or imbued with moralism. At the same time, the absolute need for established performers to accomplish their goals clashed with the belief that the theatrical medium could not be trusted to embody their artistic ideals. Verga and Capuana were thus faced with a highly contradictory situation: on the dramaturgical level, impersonality was meant to conceal the author below the surface of the work and eliminate all visible artifice; but on the practical level, while the avoidance of effects risked alienating the audience, the playwright’s role needed to re-emerge strongly so as to rebalance the excesses of “dictatorial” performers. Both the successes and failures of verismo at the theatre can be encompassed within this polarity.

In all this, the discourse of brevity stayed in the background. The closest statement indirectly implying the importance of the one-act genre in “hypnotic” terms is in a letter to Capuana about Il piccolo archivio in which Verga affirms, “Io non riconosco altra necessità teatrale che l’unità di tempo e di luogo, buon’anima—che tutto quello che l’autore ti fa passare sotto gli occhi possa realmente passare e avvenire in quel tempo e fra quelle quattro quinte. Ecco tutto” (7 July 1885; Raya 244). For overt declarations and conscious practice, one has to step slightly outside the verist chronotope and look at André

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14 Capuana was adamant in claiming a higher status for the author: “Chi crea il personaggio? L’autore o l’attore? La risposta non può essere dubbia. È appunto perché la creazione vien fatta dall’autore, che ha le sue belle ragioni di produrla nel tale e tal modo, l’obbligo dell’attore è unicamente di renderlo quale quegli lo ha formato” (“Autore” 298).

15 Thus theatrical verismo is born in opposition to and dialogue with many interlocutors: the amateur “teatro cosiddetto del ‘cu nesci parra’ (letteralmente ‘chi esce esce parla’)” (Moroni 7) seen by Verga in Catania, where he had grown up; the Risorgimento theatre, stifled by censorship and stuck in the past (Carlson, Italian Stage 177) along with historical drama in general (Capuana, Il teatro x–xi); post-Unity moralistic drama; or French “artisan” playwrights as Sardou, satirized by Capuana in Per l’arte (146–50).

16 The verists subscribed to the “persistente e resistente tradizione interpretativa ottocentesca e idealistica per cui il valore del teatro sta già nel testo scritto dall’autore (è un in sé) e non nella sua concretizzazione scenica (non è mai un per sé)” (Catalano 168). See, at least, Verga: “c’è sempre una diminuzione dell’opera d’arte, nel passare per un’altra interpretazione, fosse pure Domeneddio l’interprete” (Letter to Capuana, 24 Feb. 1888; Raya 291); also Letter to Felice Camerioni 15 June 1888 in Borgese 15; and Ojetti, Alla scoperta 123). For a concentrated summary of Verga’s views on theatre in English, see Chandler.
Antoine’s Théâtre Libre in Paris, August Strindberg’s Intima Teater in Stockholm, or Nino Martoglio’s Teatro Minimo in Rome, a venue for many of Capuana’s later one-acts in the season of 1910–11. At that time, however, the verist experience was basically surpassed. A maximum degree of invisibility for the playwright could be achieved by carefully avoiding the intermission and pushing his presence to the edges of the show. However, because Verga and Capuana’s clarity about this matter was limited, their choice of the one-act play was never exclusive and, in the case of Cavalleria rusticana, only determined by external circumstances.

The Peripeties of Cavalleria rusticana: Short story, One-act Play, and Opera

“Every genre has its methods, its ways of seeing and understanding reality, and these methods are its exclusive characteristic [. . .] The artist must learn to see reality through the eyes of the genre.”

(M. M. Bakhtin, The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship, in Todorov 83)

The three versions of Cavalleria rusticana discussed in this article, alone or compared, have already drawn significant attention as prototypes for verismo in their respective genres. Therefore, rather than repeating the details of several in-depth studies, I will summarize the essential data before proposing an intertextual analysis with an eye to performance. Genette would define as intermodal the transmodalization from the short story to the play and intramodal the passage within the dramatic mode from the play to the opera (Palimpsests 277).

The short story was first published in the Fanfulla della Domenica of 14 March 1880 and in the collection Vita dei campi in the same year. David Bradley wrote a very concise summary:

17Antoine directed the Théâtre Libre from 1887 to 1896 and adopted the one-act play as the closest formula to Zola’s naturalism (Pasquini 136–37). Strindberg, who directed the Intima Teater between 1907 and 1910, was clearly aware of the illusionist aspect although not concerned with brevity (Foreword to Fröken Julie qtd. in Cole 178); Martoglio’s Teatro Minimo a Sezioni was an attempt to emulate cinema by offering one-act plays only.

18For a definition of peripety (Greek peripeteia) as “variation with change of meaning” in a theatrical context, see Barba 56–57.
The tale of Turiddu Macca, jilted by Lola, who marries the carter Alfio. He turns to Santa, making Lola jealous, who opens her door to him while Alfio is away. Jilted in turn, Santa tells Alfio that “[. . .] mentre voi siete via vostra moglie vi adorna la casa.” Alfio confronts Turiddu, Turiddu admits his guilt, and the death of Turiddu ends the work. (54)

Probably the longest analysis comes instead from Paolo Cherchi and George Haley who meticulously foreground “un sistema di duplicazioni, iterazioni e isotopie il cui spessore è tanto vistoso grazie all’esagitata brevità della novella” (239). The device of the anonymous narrator internal to the community fully achieves the disappearance of the author, so that Turiddu’s actions are always seen through a double perspective “sempre in bilico sulla lama della verità ‘ufficiale’ e della verità del personaggio” (Fedi 14). This is a perfect example of Bakhtinian dialogism, “the layering of meaning upon meaning, voice upon voice” (“Text” 121). Indeed, the short story teems with double-voiced discourses. When Turiddu courts Santa, his speech is concurrently aimed at her and Lola, who can overhear, as a means to stir her jealousy. Furthermore, an ironic strategy surfaces when the religious allusions are insistently activated and at the same time contradicted by facts (Gibellini 216). But there is a flip-side: the same village appears completely sealed off (Fedi 8). It is, in fact, an alembic where the author, consistent with verist principles, decided to conduct his experiment of tightly-knit causes and effects. Ultimately, this sealing of the work in the perfection of the form-content dyad is the trait that distinguishes verismo from more open, stronger intertextual practices. The same approach was attempted by Verga for the first verist play.

Despite Federico De Roberto’s statement that “il dramma [. . .] fu trascritto si potrebbe dire, in un paio di giorni, tanto esso era nella novella” (“Stato civile” 21), the play’s structure kept oscillating between one and two acts as Verga tweaked it in hopes of a performance by the most promising troupe at the time.19 Eleonora Duse’s recent successes had attracted national attention, and the negotiations were undertaken by the well-known playwright Giuseppe Giacosa, who had encouraged Verga to write for the theatre. Yet, Cesare Rossi, the actor-manager, “seemed disinclined, after the triumphs with Dumas fils, to gamble on a new Italian work with a markedly different tone” (Carlson, Italian Stage 180) and Duse herself failed to advocate it full-heartedly. The solution was found when a third member of the company, Flavio Andò, himself Sicilian, promised to convince Rossi

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19See Verga’s letter to Giacosa: “La compagnia nella quale recita la Duse quanto starà ancora al Valle? Vorrà e potrà recitare una mia cosa in un atto o due a Roma nel prossimo novembré?” (8 Oct. 1883; Ciavarella 144).
if Verga accepted to pay the expenses for the costumes and give up
his profits for the first evening. At that point, the shorter form must
have seemed a necessity to facilitate its acceptance and possibly to
save personal money.

_Cavalleria rusticana_ premiered at the Carignano Theatre on 14
January 1884 and achieved a resounding success. Verga, who did not
attend the first evening, was repeatedly called to the stage during and
after the second, originally unplanned, performance. A detail often
omitted is that the play was preceded by the one-act farce _La Società dei
Tredici_ (Vergani 518), and we are left to wonder what role the contrast
between the two may have had. A frequent critical remark is that the
play’s success was due to a series of compromises and ambiguities. The
novelty perceived by Verga in the new “genre” was the portrayal of a
neglected level of society through a mediation between two normally
separate repertoires: the bourgeois drama in Italian and its subaltern,
dialect counterpart.\(^{20}\) However, his intentions were obscured when
the play’s regional folklore became the main reason of its appeal, a
perception encouraged by the dramatist’s attention to original detail
in costume and props. Other contradictions emerge at the structural
level: the condensation of time to the epilogue, the single day of
Easter, makes the dialogue suffer from diegetic excesses, especially
in some of Santuzza’s lines, too complex for realism; the beginning
and final scenes attempt an ensemble action by disguising the main
story line with many interruptions, but the central core still revolves
around melodramatic duets and trios with no role for the secondary
characters in the progression of the action; the definite shift to the
point of view of the wronged Santuzza is a return to a traditional
_personnaggio sympathique_ so criticized by Zola and a concession to the
diva; and last but not least, economic motives disappear in favor of
a psychology of passions within the familiar pattern of the bourgeois
triangle. Nonetheless, exactly because of these compromises that
facilitated communication with the audience, _Cavalleria_ was able to
enter the regular touring circuit in Italy and was translated into French
and German.\(^{21}\) A few short-lived parodies signaled that the play had

\(^{20}\) Even if the idea of brevity was embedded in the subtitle “Scene popolari,” when
Verga mentioned genre he meant the rustic theme that belonged to both prose and
theatre (see his Letter to Rod, 10 Jan. 1884; Chiappelli 80). Genette, in _The Architext_,
clearly separates the concept of genre from that of theme (19). The connection with _I
mafiusi della vicaria_ by Rizzotto and other folkloric sources has been repeatedly noted.
See at least Barsotti 39–48. For the language and style of _Cavalleria_, see D’Achille, and
Moroni (51–61).

\(^{21}\) The first translation in French was by Paul Solanges; for the German translation
by August Kellner, see Bertazzoli.
made its way into general awareness, and Verga seemed very satisfied with his profits. He had no clue as to what a boost was in store for his finances with the upcoming operatic transmodalization.

The idea of one-act operas as a way of renewing the languishing Verdian legacy had been in the air for some time and, given the success of the play and its inherent melodramatic cues (Alonge), a musical version was only a matter of time. When the publishing house Sonzogno launched its second contest for works in one act in 1888, the winners were musician Pietro Mascagni and librettists Guido Menasci and Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti. The latter had chosen the subject and Mascagni, who had seen the play performed by the Pasta troupe in Milan, had enthusiastically accepted. The opera premiered at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome and “was so sensationaly successful that the young composer was called back to the stage sixty times by an adoring audience” (Hiller 110). After seven more performances, the opera went on to repeat its overwhelming success in about 300 theatres in Italy and abroad (Morini 7), in turn becoming a fundamental inspiration for the so-called Giovane Scuola, the musical “verist” movement (Vlad 16). Such triumph ignited a series of complex copyright lawsuits between Verga, Mascagni, and Sonzogno, which found a momentary resolution in 1893 when the Sicilian accepted a one-time compensation of 143,000 lire, a fabulous sum for the time. As for artistic judgments, the first critic was Verga himself who resented being known thanks to Mascagni, though he did not openly voice his opinions of the opera (Ojetti, “Verga” 38–39).

Verga’s ambivalence—between desiring exposure and regretting the artistic results of the adaptations, including his own—are mirrored in many critics’ pervasive feeling of a progressive decay from the golden age of the short story to a bronze age, or worse, for the opera. Some critics speak of “serious distortions of the sociological and ethical characteristics of the original story, and hybrid combinations of linguistic registers” (Sansone, “Verismo” 4), or even “profanation” of Verga’s veristic intentions (Gaillard 187; 191).

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22“Tu corri sempre dietro il biglietto da cento per modestia soverchia e per dartene un esempio indecente ti dirò che la mia Cavalleria mi ha fruttato sinora L. 7000, e prima che finisca l’anno ho motivo di far conto che arrivi alle 10.000” (Letter to Capuana 9 Apr. 1884; Raya 221). The parodies were Cavalleria pocch paroll in Milan and Fanteria rusticona. Scene livornesi in Florence. For details see Moroni 29 and 34 n.3. These could be another interesting intertextual companion to the play since “the Text does not stop at (good) Literature” (Barthes, “Work to Text” 157).

23More court cases ensued, as an increasingly disgruntled Verga tried to exploit the new copyright law to the greatest extent. For the most complete account, see Gelati; for more details, see Gandolfo 53–55 and Greco 47.
Especially startling seem the transformations undergone by the characters. *Gnà* Nunzia, a helpless and poor widow in the short story, becomes Mamma Lucia, an active and rich shopkeeper; her son, Turiddu, transforms from the subaltern young male who beds wealthy women as a means of social revenge (Alonge 62) into an indefensible Don Juan (Gaillard 185); Lola’s role progressively shrinks with her shift from a fragile girl, prey to passion, into the spiteful woman ready to humiliate her rival (Barsotti 57); Alfio loses his shrewd and ambiguous traits and grows into a jovial local hero (Sansone, “Verismo” 6); Santa, whose name changes to the endearing Santuzza, makes a big leap from the rich, dry, and vindictive girl of the short story to the betrayed and derelict woman who lost her virginity and might even be pregnant (Gaillard 184). A similar degradation seems to strike the other characters as the impersonal narrator of the short story takes on more definite but stereotypical identities in the play (188), until its final metamorphosis into the cheerful presence of the romantic operatic chorus (Bradley 58). The already ghostly policemen of the play vanish with their *caserma* from the opera, along with any shadow of a political motif. Finally, the disconnect between the protagonists and the others turns into an abyss in the opera (Salvetti 71). In sum, over the years of numerous transformations of the *Cavalleria* archetype a pattern seems to have established itself: “Popular enthusiasm versus slashing criticism” (Sansone “Verga” 206).

There are, of course, discordant voices: Hiller has argued the necessity of graduality since “[t]he response could be ugly when an Italian composer was *too* innovative” (126); others have emphasized the inevitable conventions Mascagni had to employ, speaking of social esotism or hyper-realism (Salvetti 67), and questioning that verismo could have anything to do with a highly formalized and sung genre (Voss 48). This oscillation between the shock at the “degradation” and justification for the “transformation” depends on a different attitude towards speech genres and utterances. Some critics fully subscribe to the myth of filiation and, like Verga, see the changes as a deviation from the “original” idea of the “first father” (i.e. the Verga of the short story); others resonate more with the necessities of speech genres in the multi-faceted context of the theatrical medium.

24 The short story itself is obviously not “original,” but a secondary, complex genre that “digested” many primary genres (Bakhtin, “Speech Genres” 61–62). Verga saw the episode of the biting of the ear as a teen-ager (De Roberto, “Stato civile” 16) and probably heard similar stories from his aunt (Greco 46). Yet, as Capuana proudly explained in *Per l’arte* (37–39), the artist was needed to transform the document into a monument (Oliva, “Capuana” xxi).
perspectives are valuable, they remain firmly anchored to the author’s chronotope and tend to speak only of the past. With all that has been said about *Cavalleria’s* history, one might as well take a deeper interest in its present and exploit the richness of the Text in view of still viable productions.

**The Intertextual Short Play #1: The Harmonics of *Cavalleria rusticana***

“Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication [. . .]. Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account.”

(M. M. Bakhtin, “The Problem of Speech Genres” 91)

Of the three versions of *Cavalleria*, the opera seems to lead the way for intertextual potential. Firstly, because of its success, it had a definite effect on its hypotexts: the short story was promoted within its collection by appearing in the new title *Cavalleria rusticana ed altre novelle*; the play found a new life in Paris and, as a result, it went on to inaugurate the *Séries d’art* at the cinema, the first of many filmic adaptations.25 Secondly, the libretto interrupts the assumed perfect linearity of the genealogical path, short story-play-opera: when the Siciliana sung at the beginning uses a wording present only in the short story (“Lola bianca e rossa”; D’Achille 32), it points to a more complex web of relations. Thirdly, “*Cavalleria*, commonly paired with Leoncavallo’s

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25The revised collection was published by Treves in 1892. The play was included in Duse’s 1897 tour, then presented by two Sicilian companies (Grasso and Aguglia) between 1908 and 1910. Even Antoine—whose first production had been misunderstood and resulted in a flop—decided to restage the play at the Odeon, this time with a definite success (Gandolfo 47–48; Longo 322–29). As for cinema, it was directed in a comic version in 1901, then in Argentina in 1909 by Italian director Mario Gallo with the actors of Grasso’s company, then in France in 1910 for A. C. A. D. by Emile Chautard, old actor of the Odeon (Zappulla 505–06). More followed: a silent film in 1916 directed by Ugo Falena, a movie by Carmine Gallione in 1954 (Sipala 301), and others by Åke Falck (1968), Franco Zeffirelli (1982) (see Bini), and Liliana Cavani (1996). Any of the available movies would certainly be further materials for an intertextual but also multimedia performance.
Pagliacci, remains a staple in opera houses worldwide” (Hiller 111), a regular, if quite rigid, example of multiplicity during the same evening. More importantly, its highly formalized style alerts us to the fact that realism in the theatre belonged to naturalist movements between the Otto and Novecento, and still does to cinema, but is no longer a requisite for the theatre after epic tendencies have strongly resurfaced. One way to acknowledge this chronotopic shift would be to accentuate the sacral and mythic elements that abound in the play (Frosini 120), which might connect it with later experiments by Gabriele D’Annunzio, especially La figlia di Iorio. Another, less period-bound, way is to harness the layers of intertextuality thanks to the relative brevity of the three works. To do this, three assumptions need to fall: that these works necessarily belong to a specific genre, that they are sequential, and that they are mutually exclusive or contradictory.

Genre is a fluid concept and at times more of an expectation than a solid certainty (Cobley 41). The short story’s inner theatricality has been widely noted, especially in the amount of dialogue it contains (Moroni 47, Angelini 329). Verga also insists that specific clothing and tangible objects appear onstage: Turiddu’s uniform and red beret; his pipe embellished by a picture of the king; the handkerchiefs Lola gives him as farewell present; the vase of basil behind which Lola listens to his conversations with Santa; Lola’s rosary, nightgown, and the new dress Alfio brings her; the sausage plate and glasses of wine at the osteria; the knives used for the duel. Often combined with these are icastic gestures that illustrate essential attitudes of each character: Turiddu lights matches against the back of his pants; Lola displays her big golden rings with her hands on her stomach; Santa chides Turiddu for taking too many liberties on her body, which indirectly

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26It is worth noting that Monleone’s version of Cavalleria, which stirred new copyright issues, was presented in Amsterdam in 1907 in conjunction with Mascagni’s version professedly as a way to also reevaluate the older opera (Hiller 125).

27Even at the time, one should remember the regular presence of highly non-naturalistic conventions: for example, the prompter (Vergani 518) and the fact that a few episodes spoiled realism anyway. In the Trieste performance of the Rossi company, a theatre critic reported that “[d]ue o tre attori o addetti al teatro durante la scena capitale tra Santuzza e Turiddu sporgevano prima la testa e poi mezzo corpo dalle quinte” thus breaking the illusion (in L’Adria Mar. 1884. qtd. in Monti 748). The direct reference for epic theatre is, naturally, Bertolt Brecht: “The bourgeois theatre’s performances always aim at smoothing over contradictions, at creating false harmony, at idealization. Conditions are reported as if they could not be otherwise; characters as individuals, incapable by definition of being divided, cast in one block [. . .]. None of this is like reality, so a realistic theatre must give it up” (277).

tells the reader about the movements of his hands; Alfio wears his cap on the ear, meaning that he knows how to get his own justice; Turiddu bites Alfio’s ear and Alfio throws sand in his eyes. Verga is extremely attentive to the characters’ motions, which may be used as implicit stage directions and suggestions for the actors. Finally, in line with the mimetic approach of some theatre practitioners, references to animals prompt specific movements:29 Turiddu is associated twice with birds (“si pavoneggiava” 387, “come una passera solitaria” 388) and once with a fox; Lola is a “cagnaccia” (389) in Turiddu’s angry view; Cola, Santa’s father, is rich as a pig; Alfio is a cat when he returns and can guard his home, but turns into a dog when Turiddu thinks of how he would kill him.

Indeed, the short story offers rich dramatic material for various performance purposes: as source for details about the backstory during the actors’ preparation; as inspiration for a wordless scene at the beginning and end; as raw material for a chorus of initially undifferentiated performers whose members could take on the roles of the protagonists as the show progresses.

All the available versions can be integrated into a synchronic whole in which the hypotext and its hypertexts collapse and reverberations are openly exploited. Different performers can play the same character depending on which sequence is acted, so that singers may take over in the most melodramatic moments; scenes from the play and the opera may be acted simultaneously in different areas of the stage, in dialogue with each other. Furthermore, after the predictable “death of character” (Fuchs) that occurred in contemporary theatre, there is no longer a need for the same unity required by realistic aesthetics. Even contemporary pedagogues with their roots in the Stanislavskian tradition, such as Jurij Alschitz, have embraced post-structuralist approaches that foreground the autonomy of the Text: “it’s necessary to make analysis so complex and tangled that the actor doesn’t know how to play the role, rather so that the role somehow plays itself in the process of the acting, forming from nothing each time” (72). Therefore, differences in the personalities or behaviors of characters across works can be viewed as harmonics or facets of the same archetype that manifested in reality through different speech genres. They can be interpreted as elements of past (textual) lives or indicators of

29See Orazio Costa’s mimetic method (Colli; Boggio) or Moni Yakim’s physical approach to acting.
30There are obvious literary allusions to Leopardi and the limited lifespan of the sparrow (Fedi 11), but here also in the feminine, less noble version (Barberi 79).
resourceful fragmentation for otherwise stiff figures. For instance, Gnà Nunzia may be so skilled as a merchant now because of her past poverty (i.e. in the short story); Lola may have learned to behave coldly from her previous nightmares; Santuzza may still be the daughter of a rich man who knows her worth deep inside, although there is no trace of her family in the play. The audience may see a stereoscopic version of each and combine in their minds what externally may seem contradictory. Naturally, solutions have to be production-specific, and it would be unnecessary to go further on a virtual level. What is sure is that, once differences are revalued as harmonics of a possible story with oscillating boundaries and its theatricality is foregrounded and enhanced, Cavalleria rusticana becomes a significantly richer dramatic object for rehearsal, performance, and observation.

Il piccolo archivio and the Dangers of Invisibility

Even Capuana, commenting on Verga’s adaptation of Cavalleria, repeatedly mentioned the “effect” it might produce in a way that accepted its necessity at the theatre: “Regola assoluta: in teatro bisogna calcar la mano un po’ troppo per ottenere certi effetti” (12 Oct. 1883; Raya 207). Verga later questioned that inevitability, the unresolved knot that made his play contrast with the canon of impersonality. When his turn came to comment on Capuana’s first verist one-act play, he saw it as a model to imitate because of the privileged relationship it could offer between actors and audience:

Io m’immagino un pubblico scelto e intelligente, non numeroso, non guastato dalle coltellate della Cavalleria rusticana e che non è venuto in teatro per veder mordere l’orecchio a compar Alfio. Un pubblico di 10 persone, in un salone, venuto ad ascoltare la recita del Piccolo archivio fra due paramenti [. . .] e vedo la collaborazione intima che ne dovrebbe risultare fra autore attori e spettatori, la impressione sottile e immediata, la comprensione assoluta che fa il successo. (7 July 1885; Raya 244)

Capuana’s play was published in 1886, but the absence of effects also transferred to its stage life, which remained nonexistent for fourteen

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Examples of use of both spoken and musical theatre combined already exist. See, for instance, the work of Letizia Quintavalla and Bruno Stori in Parma, which brought together Shakespeare and Verdi in Un bacio, un bacio ancor, un altro bacio and Fango.

Il piccolo archivio, which “conteneva in sé il germe del teatro verista” (Oliva, “Capuana” xviii), was written in the same period as Verga’s In portineria, in two acts. Despite, or because of, their “valore sperimentale [. . .] elevatissimo” (xxvii) both plays failed to convince.
Compared to Cavalleria, scholars have practically ignored it until recently, and thus the play warrants a more detailed analysis here. Written before the short story with the same title, it was published later; this is therefore a case of narrativization, and not the opposite (Oliva, “Nota” 5). Capuana himself remarked about its double nature: “Una novella, a prima vista, e, come i giocattoli a doppio fondo, una commediola in un atto, allegra, spigliata [. . .] e nello stesso tempo abbastanza vera e umana nel contenuto. Un drammetto, del cuore, infinitesimale” (Letter to De Roberto, 7 June 1885; Zappulla 169).

The search for a theatre as close to life as possible could succeed by choosing an intimate setting where the minimum distance between the smallest number of characters eliminated the necessity for grand gestures. The one-act form was certainly optimal for the task.

During the real-time action, Federico is stuck in his elegant room because of a twisted ankle and is reordering his archive of the heart, full of “[f]iori secchi, lettere ingiallite, pezzettini di nastri, spilli” (15). Maria, his lover, arrives to bid him farewell. Apparently she will move to Naples with her husband and leave Federico, claiming that their love has just been the pretense of two bored people. Since insisting that she stay appears to be pointless, Federico consents to comment on some episodes of his diary, in hopes of capturing Maria’s attention a little longer; however, she just finds him cynical, and the result is quite the opposite. When Federico rejoices that he can finally see through her mask and prove that she loves him, she exits, enraged, possibly afraid that her record will in turn be shown to strangers (Pullini 58).

Federico comments on a real love that is now on its way to joining the others in the archive of “pratiche espletate” (18). All in all, on the surface, the play proposes a very traditional scene in the bourgeois sensibility that might be defined by the French adjective blasé, used by Maria to describe Federico (16). Everything has already been seen, even if it is now reduced to the subllest motions of the heart: a Rome
already close to a decadent atmosphere, unimportant physical pains like a twisted ankle or an aching tooth, vacuous dialogues about the nature of love, and a sense of exhaustion and lack of truthfulness that invests every emotion. Il piccolo archivio is remarkable, however, as a collection of layers and motifs within an intricate intertextuality that connects not only to the verismo school, but also to the dramatic tradition, which Capuana knew well thanks to his job as theatre critic. Linguistically, the play attempts a realistic reflection of social level and everyday language by utilizing the whole range of mastery, from grammatical mistakes to foreign words in their various stages of integration. Apart from the aforementioned “blasé,” Capuana italicized “coup de foudre,” and “flirtato” but also “buzzurri” (17) as a less than elegant word. He passed from the bureaucratic “pratiche espletate” (18) to spelling mistakes/malapropisms used for puns: “abbraccarmi” for abbracciarmi or “mille bachi” for mille baci (20). As for opera, when Federico describes Maria as splendid despite her own impression (“Siete raggiante. . .”), she answers “Di pallor!” (15), an exchange that splits a verse from Verdi’s Un ballo in maschera. Many other artistic hints are explicit, including writers Byron, Sévigné, Fogazzaro, and painters Raffaello and Correggio. Even an animal metaphor surfaces in its blasé version, when Federico is compared to a harmless lion that can now be kept at a distance: definitely far from Verga’s short story, the animal now lives . . . in a zoo. But the ultimate secret of this play seems to be the little archive itself, a detail until now unnoticed.

When Federico starts enumerating the past loves he sampled in his youth, apart from representing a faded version of Don Juan, his list is also a story of theatrical genres. His first woman was the daughter of his steward. When he comments “Allora amavo il rustico, l’ideale dell’ideale!” (20) he is in fact referring to the utopian portrayals of Arcadian societies that influenced the theatre as well. The next woman, the first real “lady” belonging to modern times, “fu così bestia [. . .] da provocare il mio rivale e buscarmi un bel colpo di punta al braccio, guaribile in dieci giorni” (21). It is easy to associate the events with Cavalleria, with the exception that the “hero” here did not (could not?) die. The third episode was an opportunity for Federico to vindicate himself of feminine volubility (“Tradii per tradire” 21) and reflects

35“So l’arte d’annoiarmi da un pezzo,” says Maria as a not too indirect denigration of Federico’s amatory skills, after defining their situation as a mere “commediola” (16). Federico retorts and calls her an “attrice consumata” (17), which in Italian means “experienced actress,” but also—literally—“consumed.”

361.1: “Raggiante di pallor. . .?”: this is made explicit in the short story version.
the tradition of bourgeois drama the verists were trying to supplant. Finally, the last abandoned woman is a clear example of emotional excesses: she writes too much and in a style suitable for Fogazzaro, but might at the same time anticipate D'Annunzio. Federico remarks that women do not seem to love realism. All the letters (i.e. types of sensibility and dramatic types) have now found their place in the little archive, and the play is actually a hypertext that not only alludes to, but playfully satirizes the texts it quotes. Finally, the integration between narrative and dramatic modes experimented by the verists culminates here when the play derives its lines directly from the letters contained in the little archive and is therefore actually made of prose.

These qualities are also the play’s limits because “almeno sulla scena, questa impalpabilità di accenni fatica a diventare situazione dramaticamente afferrabile” (Pullini 59). Even those who sponsor its resurrection on the stage within the verist framework realize the unlikelihood of such an event (Oliva, “Capuana” xxxviii). In truth, this play usually survives only as literature along with the other verist plays that attempted the highly experimental but fundamentally unsuccessful “effetto del non effetto” (xxvi). In order to secure a life beyond the page for this play, it seems that some other strategy should be attempted from a different perspective.

The Intertextual Short Play #2: The Yin and Yang of Verismo

“In the realm of culture, exotopy is the most powerful lever of understanding. It is only to the eyes of an other culture that the alien culture reveals itself more completely and more deeply (but never exhaustively, because there will come other cultures, that will see and understand even more).”


Instead of plunging the audience into an immersive and monologic “verist” experience, intertextuality onstage may opt for a view from outside that does not necessarily take sides. Rather, it can simultane-
ously expose the ambiguities of *verismo* and make a show out of that contradiction. As Julia Kristeva puts it, dialogism “does not strive towards [Hegelian] transcendence but rather toward harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation” (89). In more theatrical terms, this can be a form of Brechtian *Verfremdung*, the alienating effect that does not necessarily negate identification all the time, but aims at integrating sparks of awareness of the artificiality of the process into the performance itself.

The two plays chosen here are emblematic of the insoluble quandary of the *verismo* school at the theatre: on one hand, the effects retained in *Cavalleria rusticana* were a betrayal of verist poetics, but are also the reason why there is still talk about the play or the opera; on the other hand, *Il piccolo archivio* was the perfect embodiment of those theories, but has had a tendency to escape the attention of actors and directors completely. While *Cavalleria* opens itself up to multiple versions and overcomes the sealing of each work through a porosity of genres, *Il piccolo archivio*, despite all its allusions, tends to extreme closure by progressively silencing all other styles and leaving only the feeblest voices of “real life.” The first is centrifugal and more dialogic, the second is centripetal and ultimately monologic, but one would not exist without the other, as *Il piccolo archivio* is also a response to *Cavalleria*. In his *Course*, Saussure specifies that “in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences without positive terms” (120). In truth, these plays are two faces of the same coin.

The first intertextual proposal for *Cavalleria* alone still paid attention to the development of the story as transgeneric archetype and emphasized parallelism among genres. Conversely, in this second version a director could decide to enhance the differences—by exaggerating the theatricality of one play while working on whispered naturalness for the other, for instance. The intermission between the two could function as a threshold that divides and unites at the same time, much like the s-shaped line in the Taoist yin/yang symbol, in which the forces of the universe are distinct but contain seeds of their opposite.\(^38\) In the abstract, it is impossible to predict exactly what kind of performance would result, as there are too many options, and this must be left to an actual production. Even so, some directions

\(^{38}\)For the yin/yang symbol and its variants, see Robinet.
are quite clear. For sure, Capuana’s play alludes to the other directly and attempts to archive it. The fact that the same performers could be employed for the two plays would make tangible the otherwise “invisible but inevitable” ghosts of previous roles” (Carlson, “Invisible presences” 113). Contextually, the use of the same objects in a markedly dissimilar way could further the impression of relationship and difference. The room could be constructed with the same set pieces of Cavalleria, but arranged differently. Festive folkloric clothes and objects might hang on the wall as souvenirs from past trips (i.e. the previous play). The music of the opera might be broadcast from a radio while Federico sips from one of the glasses previously at the center of the “biting of the ear” scene. In this way, one play would be in dialogue with the other and resonate with its echoes, while at the same time changing it retrospectively.

In all this, the overall “meaning” would still reside in the minds of the spectators and, because of the infinity of the Text, would remain highly unstable because, at any time, a supplement could redefine it. To give just one example, a sintesi such as Dramma siciliano by Bruno Aschieri—a later, futurist response to Verga’s play—would immediately allow a leap in time and an unexpected humorous perspective on the last line of Cavalleria:

1
(Scena chiusa. Si accendono soltanto le luci della ribalta.
Qualche momento di silenzio, poi si sente all’interno come un colpo di lupara).
Una DONNA (entra agitatissima da sinistra, attraversando la ribalta per uscire a destra):
—“Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu! . . .”

2
(Si alza il sipario. Sulla scena qualche pianta di ficodindia e agrumi).
Un UOMO, in tenuta da corridore ciclista, accaldato ed impolverato, ricerca la foratura in una camera d’aria di bicicletta, immergendola ripetutamente in una bacinella . . .
(tela)

The effect is certainly there, but goes in the direction of the abolition of linear logic. If the rifle shot has pierced a bike’s tire in the future, were did the knives go and, most of all, has Turiddu been killed at all? No need to call the smart commissario Montalbano. Simply, the Text must go on.

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39For the application of this deconstructionist concept to performance, and indirectly to adaptation, see the fundamental article by Carlson “Theatrical performance.”
40The Sicilian character of Andrea Camilleri’s books, then transposed into an even more successful Italian TV series.
It is fascinating to look beyond the self-contained independence of the one-act play and its singleness of effect, and begin to situate the short play in a web of intertextual relationships. At the level of the utterance as performance, the short play has an opportunity to take on its privileged and more persuasive function. Thanks to its brevity it calls for something else to occur in close chronotopic proximity, at least another play.\footnote{Thus the short play embodies Kristeva’s “poetic logic where the concept of the power of the continuum would embody the 0–2 interval, a continuity where 0 denotes and 1 is implicitly transgressed” (70). Obviously, intertextuality may go beyond literature: it could as well be a dinner, a debate, or other types of entertainment.} This is not to say that it should mimic the longer form or be judged by its standards. On the contrary, it should remain in a productive dialectical relationship, at the same time a “reconciliation with the long form and bursting of its structure” (Neumann 108).\footnote{The translation from German is my own.}

The short play obtains the impossible: brevity and length together, a dramaturgical yin/yang performance whose meaning no longer refers to a single playwright’s point of view, but changes depending on the chosen intertextual thread, the ever-changing combination of short plays. The possibilities are endless and comprise more postmodern options, such as offering the same short play in different languages, translations, or contrasting interpretations by two or more directors, all with their widely diverse material realizations. By manifesting what otherwise remains only in the mind—the plurality of a “multidimensional space in which a variety of writings [...] blend and clash” (Barthes, “Author” 146)—the short play has an opportunity to outgrow its historically minor role. Thus, it may become the means of choice for anyone interested in strongly intertextual experiments and a supple tool in the hands of imaginative contemporary directors.

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